

The Succession of Constantine 45

Of Constantino's early years we know nothing, though we may suppose that they were spent in the eastern half of the Empire. Constantius served with the eastern legions in the campaigns which preceded the accession of Diocletian in 284, and it is as a young officer in the entourage of that Emperor that Constantine makes his earliest appearance in history. Eusebius tells us "x" that he first saw the future champion of Christianity in the train of Diocletian during one of the latter's visits to Palestine. He recalls his vivid remembrance of the young Prince standing at the Emperor's right hand and attracting the gaze of all beholders by the beauty of his person and the imposing air which betokened his consciousness of having been born to rule. Eusebius adds that while Constantino's physical strength extorted the respectful admiration of his younger associates, his remarkable qualities of prudence and wisdom aroused the jealousy and excited the apprehensions of his chiefs. However, the recollections of the Bishop of Csesarea, with half a century of interval, are somewhat suspect, and we need see no more than a high-spirited, handsome, and keen-witted Prince in Eusebius's "paragon of bodily strength, physical beauty, and mental distinction/* As for Diocletian's jealous fears, they are best refuted by the fact that Constantine was promoted to be a tribune of the first rank and saw considerable military service. The foolish stories that his superiors set him to fight a gigantic Sarmatian in single combat, and dared him to contend against ferocious wild

**De Vita Const. ,i. % 19.*